

Uniting Church in Australia – Queensland Synod
Together on the way, enriching community



UNITING GREEN (QLD)

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*Creator God,
Thank you for the gift of life.
Teach us to tread gently on the planet
as we walk together on the way following Jesus.
Amen.*

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1. SEASONAL REFLECTION: Preparing For A GREEN Christmas

I'm dreaming of a GREEN Christmas, a Christmas that celebrates God's Incarnation (embodied in the flesh). *The Word was made flesh and lived among us (John 1:14)*. Or as Norman Habel has expressed it, *God has joined the web of life*.

(<http://seasonofcreation.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/a-theology-of-deep-incarnation-and-reconciliation.pdf>)

As we begin the new Church year on 2 December with the season of Advent, and prepare for Christmas, it is timely to reflect on how our faith is embodied. Our actions often speak much louder than words. Are we really worshipping God, loving our neighbour and caring for the Earth?

How does our consumer society celebrate Christmas? We travel more, buy more, eat more, drink more, and produce more waste! How might we celebrate as Christians, caring for creation, and wondering about our ecological impact? Can we celebrate Christmas without costing the Earth? Can we change our ways and be counter-cultural in the consumer society?

I'm dreaming of a GREEN Christmas! Can we consume, and waste, LESS rather than more STUFF? Can we *Reduce, Reuse and Recycle* better this Christmas?

Get some "Green Tips" from members of your congregation, and share them in your own newsletter. Here are some starters:

- Buy local food or craft products at markets.
- Order on line... on behalf of UnitingWorld's projects. Do have a look at <http://www.unitingworld.org.au/eic-creative-giving-guide/>.
- Find pre-loved treasures in UnitingCare Lifeline (or other) Op Shops, or second-hand bookshops.
- Wrap in fabric, kids artworks, magazine pages, maps, jars or boxes decorated by children or last year's Christmas cards.
- Pot a fresh Christmas tree to keep; or decorate a branch, and then mulch it.
- Swap an artificial Christmas tree with someone else.
- Decorate with recycled "creations" using bottle tops, CDs, Christmas cards: ask the kids for help!
- Use LED lights
- Use rechargeable batteries: a battery charger would make a great gift!

Planet Ark has plenty more suggestions:

<http://12dos.planetark.org/documents/doc-702-12-do-s.pdf>

<http://12dos.planetark.org/documents/doc-179-festive-green-guide-2011.pdf>

REDUCE, RE-USE, RECYCLE... REJOICE

Happy GREEN Christmas and New Year to all... and to the EARTH!

Judith Dalton

2. ECO-MISSION CALENDAR 2013

i. Australian Religious Response to Climate Change

<http://www.arrcc.org.au/>

People & Planet Diaries or Calendars are printed on a mix of recycled and sustainable plantation paper, and include inspiring images of people and places around the world. The diary includes a state-by-state list of public holidays & school term dates, and space for contacts and notes. Each People & Planet Diary and Calendar also includes Australian holidays, national social and environmental awareness days, and UN international days & weeks printed throughout. Perfect for daily use, both the diary and calendar also make great gifts for Christmas! A fundraiser for ARRCC, please consider purchasing one: Diaries are \$22.95 and Calendars \$24.95 with FREE postage before Christmas!

ii. Clean Up Australia Day Sunday 3 March

<http://www.cleanupaustriaday.org.au/>

Can you organise a Clean Up around your church, business, or school? Or do something ecumenically? Or join one in your community and get to know your neighbours? (And please let Uniting Green know if you are doing anything!)

iii. Uniting Green Gathering 2013

The congregations of Blackall Range have an active ecotheology group, and have agreed to host a gathering of **Uniting Green Friends** in 2013. No date has yet been set, but it is our hope to have occasional gatherings which should be a source of great enrichment for all of us who care about creation. We will let you know as soon as we have the details.

3. GREEN STORIES

i. Recycling at The Hills Uniting Church

The Hills Uniting Church "Friendship Circle" learnt about Recycling through a speaker from the Moreton Bay Regional Council. With a display of various items from household rubbish Mandy quizzed ladies on what should go into which bin. There were a few surprises, and questions and discussion about why particular items went into particular bins. A video then showed the transfer station workings. Many plastics, glass, cardboard, paper, steel cans and aluminium drink containers can all be recycled.

People were keen to share practical recycling tips with others. "It has been a very informative session that empowered us to act, by knowing the correct way and correct items that are recyclable", said Mrs Carolyn Drummond, Events Coordinator of The Hills Uniting Church. "We have made several changes personally."

- We put the top of the cans we open back into the empty can and then squash opened ends together so they also move through the sorter to the correct section.
- We now put metal lids in large a "Milo" tin until it is full before placing it in the bin. This keeps the small lids together for easier sorting when they arrive at the Recycling and Waste Management centre.
- We also rinse glass bottles before putting them in the bin.
- Alfoil is rolled into a ball and more layers added. That way the ball of foil will move through the sorter to the correct section.
- At her gated residence with 28 homes, one of our members was able to have a "paper only" bin situated near the mailbox wall. This made it easier for people to drop the junk mail into it for recycling when it was collected from the mail box.

The Men's Shed visited the MBRC Recycling plant at the old APM paper mill at Petrie. They were met at the gate by a representative of the contractor and the convoy of cars was escorted to a parking area. They were ushered into the plant itself and given refreshments for "smoko".

Trucks could be seen through a glass window unloading their cargo onto a moving conveyor carrying the trash to a separator drum. The trash is then raised up to another floor level. “The video takes over then as we were not allowed onto



the work area of the plant”, said Don Scott. Almost the whole operation is mechanical, gradually moving the trash along to different stages of the plant. “But the separation of glass is done by hand. If any ceramic material is found in the line it is discarded, as this would mean the whole consignment of glass would be rejected by the glass factory.” The different materials are sorted into various bins and then shipped out to various recycling plants to be reconstituted and used again.

“The men found this very interesting and informative, and knowing what constitutes a recycling product was very helpful. Australians are still behind the eight ball when it comes to recycling but we are getting there”, Don said.

Editor’s Note

For further information on Recycling please see New Resources under Section 6 below.

Judith Dalton

ii. Biloela Uniting Church Ride to Worship

The Biloela congregation participated in the 2012 Ride to Worship Sunday on the 7th October. This event is co-ordinated by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) organisation.

The Bilo congregation’s participation grew from conversations during Planet Earth Sunday, the first of the Season of Creation celebrations. Through our worship we

considered practical ways in which we might develop sustainable practices in our homes and in our church buildings. Following the service, I did a bit of research and discovered “Ride to Worship” Sunday, just 4 weeks away. Although the timeframe was fairly tight to publicise the event to the wider community, we asked a group of local ride for leisure and fundraising cycling enthusiasts to come along. We also encouraged the congregation to walk, car pool and ride their gophers (motorised scooters).

The local cyclists were willing to ride their bikes to worship providing the Pastor did too. Now, I’m not a cyclist, but I did manage to walk to worship on that day. People who cycled or walked made up nearly half of our congregation on that particular day.



Members of two families regularly ride their bikes to church, and the opportunity for them to share something of their love of cycling, their spiritual experiences and the ecological benefits of riding surely opened windows to non-cyclists.

While there was some reservation surrounding a Blessing of the Bikes, the blessing was an affirmation of the commitment to treating the earth with care, thanksgiving for the freedom and simplicity of cycling. We also prayed for the cycling community, for those who have been injured or killed whilst riding, for forgiveness and patience towards drivers of vehicles who veer too close.

After worship we held our usual morning tea, and the buzz of conversation between the congregation members and visitors was awesome. Some old friendships were renewed and links with the cycling group and our congregation were formed.

We are hoping to participate in Ride to Worship next year and have already considered some ideas for ways we can bring this event into the community sphere. If you would like to participate, you can find information at

<http://www.arrcc.org.au/> as well as some photographs of participating congregations around Australia.

Although the local links are an important element of this day, events such as this open up opportunities to link with other congregations around Australia. So if you have an unused bicycle hiding in your garage, dust it down, pump up the wheels and do something great for this wonderfully made planet.

Donna Muston (Pastor)

Editor's Note

Congratulations to Biloela Uniting Church... they are the first church in Queensland to be involved in the ARRCC Ride to Worship week, and mentioned on their website!

Judith Dalton

4. ECUMENICAL ECO-MISSION

i. Queensland Churches Environmental Network (QCEN)

Qld Churches Environmental Network has had a great start, and continues to promise well for 2013.

Toowoomba Churches recently shared ecumenically in the new Christians in Dialogue studies published by the Queensland Churches Together (QCT).

http://www.qct.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1143:the-relation-between-faith-and-caring-for-the-environment&catid=24:ecumenical-resources&Itemid=112

As a result they will probably form an ecumenical environmental group related to QCEN. This is a very positive development that will hopefully inspire others to do the same in other parts of the State.

The first meeting for 2013 will be held in Toowoomba in February. The focus will be mining and agriculture; this will be an extended meeting and a number of additional people will be present.

Clive Ayre

ii. National Council of Churches Eco-Mission Project

Rev Dr Clive Ayre has been working with others to form an Eco-Mission Group within the National Council of Churches. They are hoping to have groups in each State, and to share resources across denominations on a website. For this they are requesting information on what different churches are doing.

PLEASE let us know what YOU are doing, even just 3-4 lines about your activity.

For details required, see Section 9 on Eco-Mission and send your info to green.church@ucaqlld.com.au. Thank you in anticipation!

iii. International Networks

a. International Conference

“The Christian Faith and the Earth” conference took place in South Africa in August, and it was wonderful to be there. I think my paper was well received (it is always hard to tell), but it has now been revised and enlarged for a book that is anticipated in 2013. This volume will reflect the whole 5 years of the project. In addition, I am in contact with several international scholars with a view to working on a multi-authored book broadly along the lines of Ecclesiology and the Earth; thematically it will be similar to the previous Working Group but it seems to be more promising.

Clive Ayre

Editor’s note:

b. International Impact

As a result of Clive’s international contacts through the Conference, the Caloundra Solar Cross is now featured on both the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and also the World Council of Churches websites. Have a look!

<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/603>

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/events-sections/countdown-to-climate-justice/time-for-creation.html>

5. INTERFAITH ECO-MISSION

i. Aspley UCA

The Aspley congregation plays host to an active interfaith group, and it is anticipated that an interfaith environmental care project will be trialled in the New Year.

ii. ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change)

<http://www.arrcc.org.au/>

This is a multifaith network committed to taking action on Climate Change. Following Hurricane Sandy they issued a call to prayer, with prayers from different faiths, and also highlighted the devastation in Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba and the Bahamas which was not mentioned in our media.

Their first Annual Report is now available, as well as information about the People and Planet Diary 2013, and stories from the Ride to Worship Week in October.

6. NEW RESOURCES

i. World Bank Climate Change Report: November 2012

(A Report for the World Bank by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Climate Analytics)

Turn down the heat: Why a 4 degree Centigrade warmer world must be avoided

“The world is barrelling down a path to heat up by 4 degrees at the end of the century if the global community fails to act on climate change, triggering a cascade of cataclysmic changes that include extreme heat-waves, declining global food stocks and a sea-level rise affecting hundreds of millions of people, according to a new scientific report (released 18 Nov) that was commissioned by the World Bank.”

<http://climatechange.worldbank.org/>

ii. Waterways Report

You may have noticed a while ago that the latest report on the waterways and estuaries if SE Qld has been released, and it certainly makes interesting reading.

On average, freshwater streams across the region have declined in water quality slightly; grades are as low as F. Most estuaries have either improved a grade or stayed the same, with the average grade being a C. Moreton Bay went from a C- to a B- with an increase in water clarity and a decrease in nutrients and algae. A new species of lamprey, a living fossil, has also been discovered on the Sunshine Coast.
www.healthywaterways.org.

iii. Starting a Community Garden in your Church

This has been developed from the experience of many different churches in NSW and Victoria and indicates many forms of garden. Really practical suggestions may help churches considering such a project.

<http://greenchurch.victas.uca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/community-gardens.pdf>)

iv. Second Nature: Recycling in Australia

For National Recycling Week (12-18 November) Planet Ark released an interesting new Report **Second Nature: Recycling in Australia**, and further information on this website about what is happening in different areas, and a quiz. Test yourself!

<http://recyclingweek.planetark.org/>)

v. Brisbane's Best Recycling Guide for Households

"Last year Brisbane diverted 93,325 tonnes of waste into recycling. While this is a great result, more than 80,000 tonnes of recyclable items placed in the household general waste bins went to landfill".

A new pocket guide is available from local libraries, or call 3403 8888.

<http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/environment-waste/rubbish-tips-and-bins/recycling-reducing-waste/recycling-guide-for-households/index.htm>

7. TRINITY LIBRARY <http://trinity.qld.edu.au/library/>

All members of the Uniting Church have free membership of Trinity Library. There is also a growing EBook library, but separate registration is required, and it may take a day or two before you have access... so join now!

- i. Making peace with the land: God's call to reconcile with creation**
Bahnsen, Fred, Wirzba, Norman, IVP Books, 2012
Classification: 261.88 BAH
- ii. Rainbow of mysteries: meeting the sacred in nature**
Habel, Norman C, CopperHouse, 2012
Classification: 261.88 HAB
- iii. Creator and creation: nature in the worldview of ancient Israel**
Simkins, Ronald, Hendrickson, 1994
Classification: 261.88 SIM
- iv. Creation and salvation, Conradie, Ernst M, Lit, 2012**
Classification: 231.7652 CRE

8. IN THE NEWS

i. Moderator's Letter on Uranium Mining

Rev Kaye Ronalds, Moderator, has written to the Premier, Campbell Newman, speaking out about the proposed reintroduction of uranium mining in Queensland. The Uniting Church is very clear about our position on this issue – complete opposition to the mining and sale of uranium.

The letter outlined our concern that the decision to mine and export Queensland uranium might be based more on short-term economic interest, rather than consideration of the possible long-term consequences for our world. On behalf of the Uniting Church in Queensland, the Moderator called for a review of the decision to mine and sell uranium. She also encouraged the government to focus on developing clean renewable energy sources for our future.

ii. 'Fugitive Emissions from Coal Seam Gas', Southern Cross University

“Preliminary research conducted by Southern Cross University shows methane concentrations collected around the Tara gas fields in Southern Queensland are significantly higher than surrounding areas where there is no coal seam gas infrastructure.”

http://www.scu.edu.au/news/media.php?item_id=6041&action=show_item&type=M

9. ECOMISSION DEVELOPMENT

Rev Dr Clive Ayre has been laying firm theological foundations for becoming a “Green Church” at a State and National level, and is also involved in the international scene through presenting at “The Christian Faith and the Earth” conference in South Africa. He has also given presentations to Trinity Theological College students, presbyteries, congregations and fellowship meetings and Pilgrim Learning Community courses for Lay Preachers and church leaders.

We have recently looked again at past Synod Resolutions relating to creation care, and are challenged to determine what has actually been achieved, eg *a request for all congregations, faith communities and individual members to undertake an energy self-audit and seek ways to minimise their production of greenhouse gas emissions.*

Ms Colleen Geyer, UnitingCare (Qld) Director of Mission, with great experience in environmental sustainability issues is now helping to extend policies and practice across the Synod.

We would love to know what congregations and individuals are doing towards becoming a Green Church. Are we really any greener than 3 years ago? If so, how?

I would LOVE to hear from you so we can start putting a picture together of where we are at now.... PLEASE can you email green.church@ucaqld.com.au with the following information:

- Contact Name, Phone, Email
- Congregation/ Town/ Postcode
- Presbytery
- What you have done (eg individually, in worship, property management, studies or discussions, community projects)
- Any difficulties encountered (optional)

Looking forward to hearing from you, and getting to know you better, maybe at our Gathering in 2013.

Judith Dalton

10. CONTACT UNITING GREEN (QLD)

If you have any questions or suggestions for how we may be able to help creation care become an integral part of Christian discipleship and the church's mission, please contact us **by email as we are not often in the office**. Please include your phone number.

The emails and website for Uniting Green are still the same as for Green Church. We will let you know when they change.

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